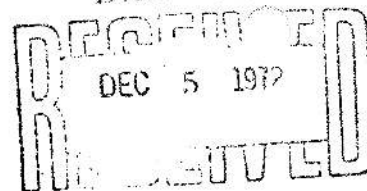


137-7

I
(a)

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS. CO
DRG - NIH



Received

Statement of Dr. John R. Heller, M.D.
Special Consultant for International Affairs
National Cancer Institute
December 4, 1972

As related to a subcommittee of your committee, I outlined my application with the Tuskegee Study and gave such information I could in regard to the initiation of the study and subsequent procedures. I have no documents to which I can refer so have had to depend upon my recollection of events and procedures in the time I was assigned to assist in the project during 1933 and 1934.

I do not know what person or group conceived or initiated the study and to the best of my knowledge, there were no protocol or guidelines set forth. My instructions were verbal and quite general to the effect that I was to examine new patients, consult as needed with the patients in the study and re-examine all individuals in the study at annual intervals.

As to whether the individuals were aware that they had syphilis, I cannot say with certainty. Most did know, however, that they had "bad blood" for which treatment had been recommended. An effort was made in my association with the individuals, to inform them to the best of my ability and their understanding, of the nature of their illness and what they should do. In no instance were they told not to seek treatment.

It is my impression that the participants in the study knew they were individuals with certain characteristics which made them interesting to the government doctors and some at least knew that syphilis or "bad blood" was involved.

It must be remembered that the state of the art knowledge of the therapy of syphilis was not uniformly accepted by all physicians and there was a feeling on the part of some that no treatment was better for some patients than much arsenic and heavy metals.

Allegations have been made that this study was an exploitation of blacks. I would like to direct your attention to the fact that black local leaders, ministers, physicians, etc. were involved from the very beginning of the study and such outstanding nationally known physicians as Dr. Charles Drew and Dr. Eugene Dibble were consulted. Dr. Dibble, in fact, was constantly

Page 2 - Tuskegee Syphilis Study

aware of the progress of the study and I saw him almost every day concerning some aspect of the study. In addition, Dr. George Washington Carver was sought to assist in the possible solution of a colloidal chemistry problem having to do with the incorporation of mercury in peanut oil as a tool in the therapy of congenital syphilis. Dr. Carver was aware of the significance of the syphilis study and seemed to be sympathetic with its purposes.

May I direct your attention to an excellent editorial by Dr. R. H. Kampmier of Vanderbilt University in the Southern Medical Journal, Volume 65, No. 10. This article clarifies some points that need to be considered by the Panel.